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AN OLD-FASHIONED LYCEUM LECTURE.

Reader, didst ever deliver a lecture at a country "lyceum?" If so, read the following. It is good. "We have been there."

Mrs. Brown having a lecture on the Parthenon, was invited to deliver it before the lyceum of Walnutville. Knowing of Walnutville only that it was fifteen miles from a railroad, Mrs. Brown suggested a more popular subject. No; Walnutville wanted the Parthenon. At the station named in the letter of direction Mrs. Brown saw a stage, and soon its driver said: "Be you the lecturer for Walnutville?"

"Yes."

"Wa'al, git right in; and you hain't no need to pay no fare neither, for I'm the committee that wrote you."

Mrs. Brown was the only passenger, and the driver cheered the long and lonely way by telling her, "Folks was thinkin' a sight about esin' on her, lots on 'em rememberin' her grandair." They were only four hours on the road, and when the time for the lecture came Mrs. Brown was escorted to the hall by the same gentleman. On the way he exhorted her to speak up, and not be like "them Methodist wimmen, who mumbled so folks did not know when to say 'Hallelujah.'"

The hall, an unpainted building, consisted of a great room with an enormous outside door opening directly into it. There were seats against the wall upon two sides, which the stage-driver explained as being the place where "old men set town-meetin' day." The people who were in their seats turned round and gazed at Mrs. Brown while she took off her wraps and put on her gloves. Telling her escort she was ready, he said he "warn't a-goin' upon the roostrom to make a fool of himself; the minister had got to do that."

While waiting for the minister, and enduring the staring of the audience, Mrs. Brown diverted her mind by wondering why a row of men were seated at the back of the platform. Finally curiosity conquered.

"What are those men up there for?"

"Them? Way, they're the Walnutville Brass Band, and they're goin' to play. Don't they have no bands where you come from?"

Fortunately Mr. Snow, the minister, appeared then, and Mrs. Brown trailed meekly up the aisle after him. Obeying his gesture, she sat down, and he said, "We will unite in prayer."

That exercise disposed of, Mr. Snow proceeded: "The Walnutville Brass Band will favor us with 'Columbia, the gem of the ocean.'"

The performance was stunning, deafening; but before breath or hearing could be regained the agile clergyman was again on his feet:

"The chorister of the Baptist church will now delight the audience with a song—'There's a good time coming boys; wait a little longer.'"

The chorister walked slowly to the steps of the platform, and waited, looking severely at Mr. Snow.

"I forgot to say," shouted the much-afflicted man, "that he will be accompanied by his daughter on a Mason and Hamlin instrument."

Then the father and the daughter mounted the stage, the organ was wheeled into its place, and the performers had a good time, if nobody else did.

The audience was indifferent to an alarming degree, looking to Mrs. Brown like scores of duplicates of the goddess Pasht who sits and glares at people in the British Museum.

Again Mr. Snow: "Mrs. Brown will now read us a piece on the Parthenon."

Mrs. Brown stepped to the front, and, amid stillness so profound that she could hear the breathing of persons near her, read her piece. It took an hour, and during all that time the death-like quiet was broken but once; and then a boy who had climbed up on the outside, and peeped in at a window, informed his companions in a hoarse whisper that "she warn't no great to look at anyhow." Not a hand stirred nor even an eyelid moved when the Parthenon was ended; but Mr. Snow allowed no time for embarrassment, for he was at once on his feet:

"The chorister of the Methodist church will sing 'Rocked in the cradle of the deep.' He will accompany himself."

The same masterly indifference while the Methodist chorister rocked himself violently backward and forward, and while he was wiping his heated brow after he had returned to his seat. But indefatigable Mr. Snow knew no weariness:

"The band will again delight us with 'Marching through Georgia.'"

"Hark! from the tombs," would have suited the temper of the audience equally as well—to all appearance, better. Finally, the minister concluded:

"These exercises will close with a benediction."

He had hardly spoken its last words when the stage-driver shouted: "Here, marm, is the money we've took. You can take your pay out on't."

Mrs. Brown, not accustomed to approving herself, declares she arose to that occasion, for she turned all the money into her pocket-handkerchief, and told him she would settle on her way to the train. One or two people walked solemnly up to her, limply shook her hand, and said, plaintively, "We have enjoyed your lecture," but with these exceptions the awful silence was not disturbed.

To this day Mrs. Brown is in doubt if the Parthenon is an improved sewing machine or a new kind of hay-prepper.—Harper's Magazine.

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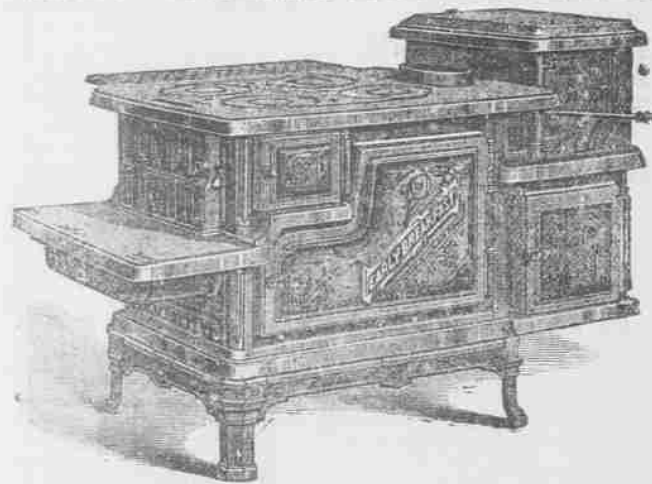
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